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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 8th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. KHOUINI (Tunisia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 33: POLICIES OF APARTHEID OF THE GOVERNMENT OF SOUTH AFRICA (continued) (A/SPC/47/L.4 and Add.1-8)

1. The CHAIRMAN said that he took it that the Committee wished to grant the requests for hearings relating to agenda item 33, contained in documents A/SPC/47/L.4 and Add.1-8.

2. It was so decided.

3. The CHAIRMAN said he assumed that the Committee would agree that, should there be any further requests for hearings, they should be made by delegations from the floor at the start of the hearings on 6 November.

4. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 72: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE PEACEFUL USES OF OUTER SPACE (continued) (A/47/20 and 383; A/SPC/47/L.5 and L.6)

5. Mr. STRAUSS (Canada) said that it was particularly fitting that, at its current session, the General Assembly would consider for adoption a set of principles relevant to the use of nuclear power sources in outer space, designed to minimize accidental exposure of human beings to radioactive materials used in nuclear power sources in outer space. The principles constituted a significant step towards a legal framework recognizing that outer space should be used in the interests of all countries. Outer space, like the Earth's environment, must be preserved for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations.

6. One of the most important issues in that regard was the problem of space debris. Continuation of current practices might lead to irreversible degradation of the region of space in which human activities took place; such practices also threatened humans on Earth, due to the danger of re-entry of large objects. His delegation noted the recommendation of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee that it should be kept informed of the results of further studies on the problem of the collision of nuclear power sources with space debris.

7. His country, though not a launching State, was an important user of space, and the problem of space debris was of concern to it. Finding a solution posed complex technical and legal problems which could best be dealt with in the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (COPUOS). The latter's efforts complemented those of the Ad Hoc Committee on the Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space of the Conference on Disarmament.

8. Canada fully supported the decision of the General Assembly to declare 1992 International Space Year, and had been participating in several projects

(Mr. Strauss, Canada)

and activities in that context. The Canadian Space Agency had developed Geoscope, a computerized database on environmental phenomena for analysing vegetation, pollution, ocean temperatures and atmospheric currents. Canada had also participated in other international initiatives relating to geographic phenomena and had actively promoted the implementation of the recommendations of UNISPACE 82. In May 1992 a Canadian expert had participated in an evaluation mission to Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Mexico in connection with the establishment of a centre for space science and technology education in the region.

9. It was essential to take advantage of the current radically changed political conditions so as to move ahead with cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space, ensuring that such exploration and use was limited to peaceful purposes.

10. Ms. ADAMSON (Australia) said that three themes frequently referred to in the current session of the General Assembly, namely renewed confidence in the United Nations system, the importance of the environment and preventive diplomacy, were relevant in the context of the peaceful uses of outer space. The Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space, too, had enjoyed renewed confidence over the past 12 months, while the wide participation of many countries in International Space Year had focused attention on the continuing importance of space.

11. The conclusion, after 13 years, of negotiations on a set of principles relevant to the use of nuclear-power sources in outer space (A/SPC/47/L.6) was a major achievement. The need for more attention to all aspects of the outer space environment, especially those potentially affecting the Earth's environment, was recognized in the Committee's report (A/47/20) and in the omnibus draft resolution (A/SPC/47/L.5). It was appropriate that the new way of thinking about the environment brought about by the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development should be reflected in the Committee's work.

12. In April 1992, the Australian Space Office had sponsored a Radar Remote Sensing Conference that had introduced a new era of Earth observation and management based on remote sensing. Another Australian contribution to International Space Year was its Land Cover Change Project, under which a set of reports demonstrating the use of remotely sensed data for monitoring land cover change were to be published in a variety of forms.

13. In addition to building on its achievements, COPUOS needed to consider new issues such as the collision risk posed by orbital debris, and she urged it to include space debris as an item on the agenda of the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee. A first step in dealing with the problem would be to agree on the establishment of good management practices and enhanced information exchange. It was the policy of the Australian Government to remove satellites from the geostationary orbit at the end of their effective operating life, thus avoiding the accumulation of dead satellites in that very

(Ms. Adamson, Australia)

important region of outer space. Her delegation would support moves to have such good management practices recognized in agreements formulated within the COPUOS framework.

14. Mr. ABDERAHMAN (Egypt) said that the international community must try to advance the cause of maintaining outer space for peaceful purposes and promoting international cooperation on the peaceful uses of outer space, taking into account the needs of the developing countries, while also seeking to prevent further militarization of outer space.

15. Although more than two decades had passed since the entry into force of the Treaty on Principles Governing the Activities of States in the Exploration and Use of Outer Space, Including the Moon and Other Celestial Bodies, the two main components of the current legal regime - prevention of an arms race in outer space and promotion of the peaceful use of space - had yet to be adequately developed. COPUOS had a special responsibility to develop international space law and should complement the work being done in bilateral and multilateral forums for the prevention of an arms race in outer space and provide substantive input to discussions in the Conference on Disarmament. While it would not be desirable to establish a formal link between the two bodies, to argue that issues raised in one were not relevant to discussions in the other was tantamount to separating interrelated issues.

16. It was essential to elaborate legal principles which would ensure that all countries had access to, and benefited, from, space activities. Accordingly, existing inequalities between technologically advanced space Powers and the developing countries should be addressed. States with advanced space programmes had a special responsibility to help developing countries build indigenous civilian space capabilities. His delegation therefore supported the initiative taken by COPUOS to examine in its Legal Subcommittee the question of how to explore and use outer space for the benefit of all States, particularly developing States. It welcomed the consensus reached on Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space (A/47/20, annex), and would support their adoption. It also welcomed the increased interest of COPUOS in the subject of the relationship between the Earth's environment and outer space.

17. Egypt acknowledged the importance of remote sensing to monitor the Earth's environment. Arrangements should be made for more effective dissemination of remote-sensing information, and prices for data and access fees for data reception should be reduced significantly so as to make them affordable for developing countries.

18. With scientific and technological development making the world more and more into an interdependent and small village, peoples of the world were looking to outer space as a source of both hope and danger. His Government believed that COPUOS could play a major role in maximizing the hopes for benefits from outer space and in ensuring the widest possible diffusion of those benefits to all the peoples of the world.

19. Mr. DIMITROV (Bulgaria) said that the agreement reached in COPUOS on the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space constituted a major achievement. Those Principles, together with the principles relating to remote sensing of the Earth from space, would make a vital contribution to the promotion of international cooperation in space. It now remained for the General Assembly to adopt them.

20. He expressed the hope that COPUOS would be equally successful in addressing other outstanding issues requiring urgent consideration and that it would focus on the issue of the use of space science and technology in monitoring and exploring the environment. Special attention should also be given to the issue of protecting the space environment and to the problem of space debris. In his delegation's view, further exchange and dissemination of information concerning national space research would also be very useful.

21. Time had clearly demonstrated the importance of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications in promoting broader cooperation in space science and technology. The Programme should continue to focus on long-term, task-oriented education in space technology, as well as on specific application areas. His delegation hoped that the wide-ranging schedule of meetings, training courses, seminars and conferences to be held in 1993 would promote more comprehensive application of space technologies, in line with the needs of all countries. It supported the proposal to establish regional centres for space science and technology education.

22. His delegation was of the view that the inclusion of the item "Spinoff benefits of space technology: review of current status" in COPUOS' agenda was one means of applying, in practice, the principle that the exploration and use of outer space should be conducted for the benefit of all nations. In that connection it supported the recommendations in paragraphs 143 and 144 of the Committee's report.

23. As a country with limited resources, Bulgaria was interested in international, regional and bilateral cooperation in space activities. It had taken part in the World Space Congress held in Washington D.C., and was participating in INTERCOSMOS programmes, notably the "Apex" and "Svet" projects. It had also participated in other projects in such areas as remote sensing, space biology and medicine, space communications and weather forecasting. Notwithstanding the country's current economic difficulties, it was planning to intensify its cooperation, on both the bilateral and multilateral levels, with partners in the United States, Germany, Italy and France. It was his country's desire to build mutually beneficial cooperation with the European Space Agency as a part of the new international environment.

24. Ms. ARYSTANBEKOVA (Kazakhstan) said that the report of the Committee on the Peaceful Use of Outer Space (A/47/20), presented a complete picture of the many activities it had been carrying out. The approval by consensus of the Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space deserved special mention.

(Ms. Arystanbekova, Kazakhstan)

25. The topic under discussion was of particular interest to Kazakhstan. In September 1991, Kazakhstan had established a space research agency whose mission was to advance the Government's space policy by formulating and executing the national space programme, coordinating fundamental and applied space research and executing commercial space projects. The Agency was also responsible for exploiting space applications, introducing them into the Kazakh economy and organizing the training of personnel for the country's space activities.

26. Kazakhstan had recently opened an institute for space research which brought together scientists and specialists in space sciences. The institute had been participating in planning for the mission of the first Kazakh astronaut whose assignments would include experiments in biotechnology, genetic engineering, economics and monitoring of the environment.

27. Since obtaining independence, Kazakhstan had been working hard to broaden international cooperation in the study and use of outer space for peaceful purposes in order to take advantage of the economic, scientific and technical benefits that space activities could bring to its people. In December 1991 Kazakhstan and the other member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States had signed an agreement whereby they had undertaken to carry out space activities in accordance with existing norms of international law and to coordinate their efforts to solve international legal problems in that field. Kazakhstan was also party to an agreement regarding procedures for the maintenance and use of space infrastructure for the space programmes of CIS States. The agreement had established procedures for the functioning and use of space facilities which were the property of the States where the facilities were located. Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation had also signed a special agreement on procedures for the use of the Baikonur Space Centre. Under that agreement, the space research agencies of the two countries would jointly coordinate the planning and implementation of space programmes and the application of space technology in science and industry. Commercial projects at the Space Centre would also be executed jointly between the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation. Baikonur was also to be host to a State centre for new space technology whose mission would be to plan projects and programmes in the areas of space research and engineering.

28. Her Government believed that the development and strengthening of international cooperation for the peaceful exploration and use of outer space was one of the most effective ways to preserve outer space for peaceful purposes. The new realities of the post-confrontational period in world history required a new agenda for an integrated world and created opportunities for the world community to turn to the United Nations for effective cooperation in the service of peace and progress.

29. One of the most important goals of Kazakhstan's foreign policy was to curtail the arms race and prevent it from spreading to outer space. In planning and implementing its space research policy, her Government intended

(Ms. Arystanbekova, Kazakhstan)

to make active use of international experience and to strive for constructive dialogue with all Governments toward that end. Kazakhstan was counting on closer and more productive cooperation on the bilateral level and within the framework of the United Nations to settle political, legal and technical issues relating to the use of outer space.

30. Mr. TRUONG TRIEU DUONG (Viet Nam) said that, while there had been many favourable developments in the peaceful uses of outer space in past years in the fields of telecommunications, monitoring of Earth's environment and air and maritime safety, and numerous efforts had been made to further international cooperation in the peaceful application of space technology, much still remained to be done. He hoped that cooperation with a view to the effective use of outer space for peaceful purposes would be promoted through bilateral, regional and international programmes and that the United Nations would play a more active role in that regard. The Secretariat should redouble its efforts to establish regional centres for space science and technology education in developing countries. His delegation joined others in appealing to the General Assembly to make adequate budgetary allocation for the United Nations Programme on Space Applications in order to enable it to implement fully the recommendations of UNISPACE 82.

31. His delegation was pleased to note the consensus reached by COPUOS on a set of principles relevant to the use of nuclear power sources in outer space. Their adoption would advance international space law and make it possible to turn to other equally important issues such as the definition and delimitation of outer space and the character and utilization of the geostationary orbit. The question of space debris, if not satisfactorily resolved, would hamper international cooperation in space activities. His delegation joined other delegations in calling for the immediate inclusion of that item in the agenda of future COPUOS meetings.

32. All activities relating to outer space must benefit mankind as a whole, with due attention to the needs of developing countries. Outer space must not become a source of conflict or military confrontation. Both the Conference on Disarmament and COPUOS could play important roles in the prevention of an arms race in outer space. Viet Nam accorded high priority to remote sensing activities, and a variety of such programmes were being carried out. The results had been modest but very meaningful for his country's development and Viet Nam looked forward to expanded cooperation in that area, as well as to the establishment of a centre for space science and technology education in the region; he appealed to the international community to provide financial and technical assistance to that end.

33. Mr. JUSUF (Indonesia) said that, in an era of fundamental change on the global scene and developments in space science and technology, COPUOS remained an indispensible forum for achieving results in international cooperation in space. Indonesia was firmly committed to promoting space science and technology and to their applications for economic, social and cultural

(Mr. Jusuf, Indonesia)

development. The United Nations had an especially important role to play in assisting developing countries in the dissemination of information on space-related matters. As a developing country, Indonesia faced the formidable challenge of maintaining sustainable growth and development, while at the same time taking into consideration the natural environment, and it believed that the international community should endeavour to promote cooperation in matters concerning the peaceful uses of outer space on both the international and the regional level.

34. His delegation welcomed the adoption by consensus of the draft Principles Relevant to the Use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space and noted with satisfaction that the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee had held a special session to mark the International Space Year. The discussion on approaches to international cooperation in space had been very useful. In that regard, he expressed the hope that the United Nations would encourage the continued participation of all countries - particularly the developing countries - in the activities planned for International Space Year and that developed and developing countries alike would take concrete steps to ensure that international cooperation became a reality for the benefit of all countries. He also welcomed the efforts of the United Nations and other relevant international organizations to give priority consideration to the implementation of the recommendations of the Second United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE 82). As a number of the recommendations of UNISPACE 82 had yet to be implemented, his Government supported further study on those issues; at the same time, it was deeply concerned that many of the long-term workshops and programmes had been under-funded. Indonesia had conducted various space-related activities as part of its contribution to UNISPACE 82 and within the framework of International Space Year. In cooperation with the United Nations, his Government was planning a regional conference on space science and technology for sustainable development for States members of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The Lexique Conference would, inter alia, review the state of the art of space science and technology, progress in space-related activities in support of sustainable development - particularly in the Asia and Pacific region and examine cooperative programmes for developing countries in the region. Indonesia fully supported the idea of establishing a regional centre for space science and technology education and had offered to host such a centre.

35. In the field of remote sensing, Indonesia believed that the United Nations - with the assistance of developed countries and the relevant international bodies - should continue its efforts to promote cooperation to ensure the continuity, compatibility and complementarity of systems for remote sensing. Regularly scheduled meetings should be held between satellite and ground station operators and their users. Moreover, due attention should be paid to the financial problems experienced by developing countries as a result of increasing commercialization of remote sensing. Indonesia had been the applying the tools of remote sensing to study volcanic eruptions,

(Mr. Jusuf, Indonesia)

deforestation and desertification. In addition, an equatorial radar facility would be constructed which would be capable of providing continuous data and information on atmospheric structure and dynamics.

36. He was encouraged to see that concern about the environment was being translated into political will and a commitment to ensure appropriate action. Indonesia remained steadfast in its commitment to strengthening cooperation for the protection and enhancement of the environment, and therefore welcomed the call for further research for the development of improved technology for the monitoring of space debris (General Assembly resolution 46/45, para. 24).

37. Indonesia attached great significance to the issues of defining and delimiting outer space and the use of the geostationary orbit. The latter should be considered a limited natural resource and used rationally and equitably in the interests of all countries, taking into account the special needs of developing countries, particularly those lying on the equator. It was particularly urgent that a sui generis regime be established for the geostationary orbit in order to guarantee and establish the rights of all States in that area.

38. Indonesia believed that there was a need for appropriate regulatory mechanisms to focus space application programmes on the needs and interests of developing countries. The world community should redouble its efforts to fulfil its obligations to mankind as a whole to achieve genuine equality in harnessing the potential of outer space for peaceful uses.

39. Mr. FLOREAN (Romania) was gratified to note the progress which had been made in outer space and related activities, as well as to note that more States and specialist groups had recently become involved in the activities undertaken in the field of new applications of space technology.

40. Romania was currently engaged in the process of fully integrating itself into the international space structures. At the national level, the Romanian Space Agency was entering into new scientific and economic cooperation agreements with other foreign specialized bodies. Romania's goal was to make full use of its experience and human resources and to participate in international programmes in the utilization of outer space for peaceful purposes. Its research facilities and industry were capable of making an increasing contribution to the work being done at the international level.

41. The scientific and educational programmes carried out within the framework of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications played a significant role in furthering the use of outer space for peaceful purposes. His delegation had been impressed by the willingness of Member States and international organizations to cooperate in making a success of International Space Year, and hoped that the interest shown by a large number of countries would lead to a more direct and substantive dialogue and practical results.

(Mr. Florean, Romania)

42. Every step taken to facilitate the broader exchange of views and experience was welcome. The recommendations of UNISPACE 82 were still valid and his delegation hoped that financial obstacles would not prevent Member States from continuing to share the tremendous achievements in space-related activities.

43. The work of COPUOS and its two subsidiary bodies in 1992 had been marked by the completion of the Principles Relevant to the use of Nuclear Power Sources in Outer Space. That was a proof that the Committee had entered into a new era of progress.

44. The Secretary-General's report (A/47/383) showed that an increasing number of United Nations bodies and specialized agencies were also involved in programmes and activities related to the implementation of UNISPACE 82. His delegation welcomed those developments as well as the great contribution made by the regional and international space agencies to the activities undertaken in coordination with the United Nations. The results of their activities should be reported periodically to the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee. His delegation looked forward to discussion in that Subcommittee of the new theme agreed on: "Space-based communication: the expansion of current services and increased understanding of new systems and the services they will make possible" (A/47/20, para. 79).

45. Mr. KALPAGE (Sri Lanka) said that the use of space and space-related technologies for peaceful purposes continued to be a prime concern of the United Nations. It was to the multilateral institutional structure that made up that system that many developing countries looked when seeking information on space technologies that could be of assistance to their development processes.

46. Referring to the Committee's report (A/47/20) he said that the chapters dealing with the Scientific and Technical Subcommittee were of particular interest. The special session referred to in paragraph 82 had included a very impressive symposium on space technologies and the Earth's environment. The Secretariat's report on that symposium was an invaluable document for those who followed developments in outer space and problems of the environment as well as international cooperation in both fields. The utilization of space technology and international environmental protection programmes would be important in the future, for it was to the United Nations that developing countries would turn for information and advice.

47. The agreement reached on principles relevant to the use of nuclear power sources in outer space was a significant addition to the multilateral legal framework in the field of the peaceful uses of outer space. The General Assembly should assure COPUOS and its Legal Subcommittee of its continuing support for their efforts in the further progressive development of international law in that field.

(Mr. Kalpage, Sri Lanka)

48. The activities carried out as part of the United Nations Programme on Space Applications deserved special mention. Although its funding was limited, that Programme had established itself as one of the more substantive technical assistance programmes of the United Nations.

49. His delegation also supported the proposal that a third conference on the exploration and peaceful uses of outer space should be organized in 1995, to be held in a developing country, with a view to consolidating the momentum provided by International Space Year.

Draft resolutions A/SPC/47/L.5 and L.6

50. The CHAIRMAN said he took it that the Committee wished to adopt draft resolutions A/SPC/47/L.5 and A/SPC/47/L.6 without a vote.

51. It was so decided.

52. The CHAIRMAN recalled that at the previous meeting, the representative of Austria had conveyed a request from the Working Group on International Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space that he [the Chairman] should draw the Fifth Committee's attention to the request contained in paragraph 29 of document A/47/20 so that it would be duly taken into account when the Fifth Committee dealt with the matter. He took it that the Committee wished to accede to that request.

53. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.